Secret - Working Paper

Notes from Briefing of ARRB Staff on Stations
(11 October 1995 - ARRB conf. room)

CIA Attendees: Bill McNair
Lee Carle
John Goins
Chuck Briggs
Hal Bean
Barry Harrelson

Bill re Stations:

No problem with release of COS, fact we have overseas locations, CIA representatives in specific countries -- the problem comes with officially acknowledging the stations thereby putting the host government and service in a position of explaining why it is allowing a foreign espionage unit to operate in the country. This may become a serious political issue for the government, especially in countries where the government does not acknowledge its own service. Also can be perceived as "rubbing their nose in it" and can effect the trust between the Agency and the host service (violated agreement of confidentially).

Marwell pointed out that this information was 30 years old and ask what was the impact of acknowledging a station presence in 1963 on current operations or relations.

Bill responded "opened up old sores" and cited Rome and the sensitivity to our involvement in past election. Mentioned the reaction to the announcement on covert actions by DCI.

Gunn ask if stations = liaison relationship; Bill said the other service can not say it did not know the CIA was operation in its own country -- would look incompetent.

Mary ask about changes in government; Bill responded that intell types tend to stay own or its revolving door where a good will be back in power at some point.

Bill comments on specific stations

It important to the story such as Mexico City and the surrounding stations which were involved in the cable exchanges re Oswald, then will release.

"Don't take it away from us for little or no gain to the story", I. e. if not critical to the story let us protect.

He indicated he could live with opening the stations for short windows if important to story, but also said it created a problem about protecting other activities in that window

Moscow - opened for Oswald windows

Rome - No, past elections issue and current narcotics projects

Delhi - No, counter narcotics projects

Madrid - Liaison relationships have been up and down; (PNGed five officers) can't afford any more flaps

Rabat - long time relationship w/ head of state; could give anti-government labor unions an issue(however, would not "fall on my sword" for this one

Helsinki and Stockholm -- would go to DCI with request to appeal (governments currently under fire for cooperation with US/very sensitive operation under way

Marwell ask about substitute language: Scandinavia, Northern Europe -- Bill responded with Western Europe/ said southern Europe for Rome, Madrid etc. "ok"

London: do not want to acknowledge but could live with

Australia - very sensitive

Berlin - is open in 1955; 1963 (?) Bill may have been having second thoughts about previous statement "to release", but I think it still stands -- there was a discussion of why Berlin important to story.

Mary ask about other European stations, Bombay and some South American stations

Bill did not have specific on other stations but made a couple of comments

Bonn and Hague - no problem

Brussels - very sensitive to any mention of intelligence service presence

Would get back to them on other stations

[I promised Bill a list of the Stations]

Other issues discussed

Crypts other than LIs and AMs - there was a discussion re deleting digraph and letting rest of crypt; everyone seemed receptive, but no decision.

Bill mentioned Iranian takeover as good example of damage caused by release of documents with crypts, file #s, etc. **Gunn** ask if there was an internal "damage" study prepared. **Bill** said he would check.

Marwell rejected the approach of the Agency having the opportunity to discuss Board actions before official notification. If we have evidence, need to present upfront, not come back with additional evidence after the decision.

The balancing of public interest vs Agency needs came up several times; Marwell commented that even if a document or item is not important to the Oswald story, the Agency must still defend.

Bill stated several timed during the meeting "If important to the story, we can live with release".

Barry
12 October 1995